

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OUAGAD 03408 091206Z
ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 NEA-10 EB-08 PM-05 NSC-05
SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00
/077 W

-----028357 092058Z /72

R 091128Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4912
INFO AMEMBASSY LAGOS

C O N F I D E N T I A L OUAGADOUGOU 3408

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINR, PGOV, NI, UV
SUBJECT: AFRICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD NIGERIA

REF: STATE 208244

1. GOUV MAINTAINS CORDIAL RELATIONS WITH THE PRESENT NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT WHICH IT GENERALLY REGARDS AS PLAYING A RELATIVELY MODERATE ROLE IN AFRICA AND IN INTERNATIONAL FORA. THE FACT, HOWEVER, THAT NEITHER COUNTRY HAS A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR IN THE OTHER'S CAPITAL SUGGESTS THAT THESE RELATIONS ARE NOT CONSIDERED TO BE OF VITAL IMPORTANCE EITHER IN OUAGADOUGOU OR IN LAGOS. LANGUAGE, OF COURSE, IS A PROBLEM AND THE FACT THAT THE NIGERIAN CHARGE DOES NOT SPEAK FRENCH MAKES IT PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO OPERATE EFFECTIVELY IN UPPER VOLTA.

2. VOLTAN OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, ARE QUITE CONSCIOUS OF THE SIZE AND IMPORTANCE OF NIGERIA. THEY REALIZE THAT NIGERIA BECAUSE OF ITS LARGE POPULATION AND ITS ECONOMIC STRENGTH IS ENTITLED TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN AFRICA. IT IS UNDOUBTEDLY WITH THIS IN MIND THAT GOUV DECIDED SEVERAL MONTHS
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AGO TO OPEN AN EMBASSY IN LAGOS, EVEN THROUGH THE AMOUNT OF BUSINESS TO BE TRANSACTED EITHER IN THE POLITICAL, ECONOMIC OR CONSULAR FIELD WOULD NOT NORMALLY WARRANT THE ADDITIONAL EXPENSE.

3. AS MOST OTHER FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES OF WEST AFRICA, UPPER VOLTA MIGHT BE RELUCTANT TO REGARD NIGERIA

AS SPOKESMAN FOR AFRICA EXCEPT ON CERTAIN ISSUES SUCH
AS APARTHEID, RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA. AS A SMALL AND
VERY POOR COUNTRY, UPPER VOLTA CANNOT ESCAPE THE FACT
THAT ITS INTERESTS AND THOSE OF NIGERIA, WITH ITS
SIZE AND WEALTH, DO NOT NECESSARILY COINCIDE.
ON WEST AFRICAN ISSUES, GOUV WOULD BE MORE LIKELY TO
LOOK FOR LEADERSHIP TO THE IVORY COAST OR
SENEGAL.

4. IN SHORT, RELATIONS BETWEEN UPPER VOLTA AND NIGERIA
ARE CORRECT BUT NOT CLOSE AND, IN THE ABSENCE OF A
COMMON LANGUAGE, COMMON BORDERS, AND TRIBAL TIES, THIS
SITUATION IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE IN THE IMMEDIATE
FUTURE. GRAHAM

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